

“Grades”, simply a number, however, one of the most significant factors of stress in young people’s lives. This single set of digits or a singular letter, has caused numerous cases of anxiety for young people. Why? This collection of pen strokes or a combination of eight pixels represents how well we understand a concept. However, it is the weight of arbitrary values that we place on letters and numbers. This weight, the arbiter of our understanding, and ability to move forward in academics is solely defined by a letter. This arbiter of our future often stands as the only barrier between us and the goals we seek, the weight of which, we create ourselves.

Grades are one of the arbitrary objects that we place extreme weight on alongside money. Defined as “a mark indicating the quality of a student’s work,” however, we often take this one step further leading many students to pressure themselves to absolute extremes over the mark that they will receive. But, what if grades were less of this overall object that defines our overall worth and more of what they are designed to do, assign a level to the quality of work? It is the education system that creates this stress and weight by ranking students based on this system, rather than using it solely to rank their work and nothing else. This archaic idea is the source of students’ anxiety. Rather than create extensive weight on a word, why not use it as an indicator and what it is, simply, a word? Similar to the weight given to money by the government and society, it is the value we give objects that defines them not the object themselves. Without the purpose given to objects by people, they are simply objects, in the case of “grades” it is a combination of letters. Objects in life have no meaning except for the meaning that we give them.

Grades, like money, can have have different meanings, however, it is the meaning that we give it that gives it purpose. For example, if we choose to let grades solely be a reflection of our work rather than ourselves they take on a whole new meaning. No longer do we have a word defining itself as the arbiter of our worth or meaning as people, but rather as a scale to define the quality of a specific assignment. It is in these small details that the meaning and purpose of anything comes into play. Whether it be grades or ourselves as human beings, we are simply what we define ourselves to be. So in the end, grades are only as powerful as we let them be and with that it begs the question; what will you define grades to be? Will you let them be the scale of your work or the arbiter of your future?